



ANTHONY G. BROWN, MARYLAND ATTORNEY GENERAL

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Attorney General Brown Urges Biden Administration to Implement Ban on Menthol Cigarettes and Flavored Cigars

**BALTIMORE, MD (January 16, 2024)** – Maryland Attorney General Anthony G. Brown and a coalition of 21 Attorneys General (the “coalition”) submitted a [comment letter](#) to the White House Office of Management and Budget, urging the Biden administration to complete its review and implementation of a plan to prohibit the sale of menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars. The [proposed FDA rules](#), which are supported by ample evidence, are long overdue.

In today's letter, the coalition specifically highlights calls by civil rights and public health groups to remove menthol tobacco products from the marketplace in order to protect public health and address the unequal impact of these products on minority communities and other vulnerable populations, including young people.

“Overwhelming scientific evidence – including the FDA’s own findings – leaves no doubt that menthol cigarettes have far-reaching negative impacts on public health, especially on young people and minority populations where tobacco companies aggressively market these products,” **said Attorney General Brown**. “Masking the flavor of these products does not mask the harm to users’ health and wellbeing, and I support eliminating these products from the marketplace.”

Tobacco companies add menthol to cigarettes and cigars as a flavor enhancer. This flavoring makes it much easier for young people to develop an addiction to nicotine. Menthol cigarette use is also higher, when compared to other groups, among LGBTQ+ smokers, smokers with mental health problems, and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations.

For decades, the tobacco industry has aggressively marketed menthol cigarettes in Black communities through heavy advertising and promotional campaigns. As a result, in 2020, approximately 81 percent of non-Hispanic Black adult smokers used menthol cigarettes, compared to 34 percent of non-Hispanic White adults.

In the letter, the coalition urges the Biden Administration to finalize its review of the FDA’s proposed rules. The Attorneys General also address unproven claims that the proposed menthol ban will increase illegal trade or criminalize individual purchases, possession, or use of menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars. The coalition argues that the FDA’s proposed rules are critical

steps toward advancing health equity and protecting public health. Furthermore, banning menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars will bring the country closer to achieving the Cancer Moonshot, President Biden’s historic push “to end cancer as we know it.”

In submitting the letter, Attorney General Brown joins the Attorneys General of Arizona, California, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, the Northern Mariana Islands, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, and South Dakota.

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